

2023

INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY

STATEMENT ON

CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Major Group for
Children and Youth
the space for children and youth in the United Nations

ABOUT US

MIGRATION YOUTH AND CHILDREN PLATFORM

The **Migration Youth and Children Platform** (MYCP) is a global youth-led space for children and youth to **contribute** to and **engage** in certain intergovernmental and allied policy processes and realise our **collective right** to meaningful youth engagement as enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Our work so far with our partners – IOM and UNICEF – has shown the **potential** of young people's participation in decision-making. Since 2018, we have taken the **lead in consulting** with youth stakeholders worldwide and engaged them in the key areas where **migration issues** are discussed, particularly the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). In this way, MYCP aims to **advance** the **engagement** and **meaningful** participation of children and youth in policy spaces related to migration at the global, regional and national levels.

We are committed to shaping migration policy and fostering a community of young leaders passionate about influencing positive change in migration by enhancing young people's understanding, knowledge and skills in relation to migration issues and policy-making, as well as by providing them with a peer-to-peer knowledge platform to consult, share expertise and work together towards groundbreaking solutions in the migration space.

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INTRODUCTION

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION STRIKE THE HEART OF OUR FUTURE AND HUMANITY

Globally, slow-onset events and extreme weather events force millions to flee. According to the *Grid 2023* report by the *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* (IDCM), in 2022, there were **8.7 million** internally displaced people from 88 countries and **31.6 million** internal migratory movements due to *climate-related disasters*.

And, while the **lack of disaggregated data prevents** us from knowing exactly the number of children and youth displaced, the 2023 *UNICEF report*, "*Children displaced in a changing climate*," gives us insight into the **severity** of this problem. This report found that **between 2016 and 2021**, there were:

"43.1 million internal displacements of children linked to weather-related disasters."

We cannot understate the severity of these climate-induced forced migrations, as they have repercussions that go beyond people's physical movement, exacerbating existing *inequalities* and leading to new ones, placing **children and youth at the intersection of many factors**. In addition, the disruption of mobility patterns and the implementation of stricter border regimes place another barrier, **amplifying their vulnerabilities**. As a result, for many children and youth on the move, and at its many intersections, **access** to health, education, sanitary products, the right to life, food, security, and preservation of their culture and development, among many more, is **compromised** during these movements.

WHEN DISCUSSING THE HEIGHTENED FREQUENCY OF NATURAL AND HUMAN-DRIVEN DISASTERS, WE MUST MENTION THAT THESE EVENTS CURRENTLY AFFECT COMMUNITIES THAT CONTRIBUTE LESS TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

For many Indigenous and Pastoral Communities around the world, climate-induced migration, resulting from extreme and slow-onset weather events, creates new vulnerabilities, adding to other drivers of migration, such as **conflict, land grabbing, and development aggression, among many more**— affecting the transmission of ancestral knowledge, as well as access to their sacred sites, and collective history, to mention a few.

Even though Indigenous and Pastoral Communities have a **limited** carbon footprint, emitting few greenhouse gases, they reside in some of the world's **most at-risk areas**. For example, the Pacific Islands countries of Vanuatu, Kiribati, Fiji, and Tuvalu, as well as the Central Sahel, Somalia, Yemen, and Chad, find themselves **grappling with the severe consequences of climate change**, leading to many **Economic and Non-Economic Losses and Damages**, affecting all aspects of their lives and threatening their survival.



Regardless of whether climate is a primary or a secondary factor for mobility, it is a factor nonetheless. It is **essential to understand** that in all cases, extreme and slow-onset weather events can potentially **trigger secondary** displacements and disasters, creating a **circle of disaster-displacement-disaster**, affecting their exposure, capacity, and vulnerability to the disasters, further exposing children and youth to violations of their human rights.



Giving due importance to inclusivity and intersectionality, over the past year, our different teams have done substantial work in **advocating** for children on the move, girls, children with disabilities, and children living in Indigenous and Pastoral Communities, voicing needs and priorities.

As a result, we want to focus this Statement on showcasing the interconnected challenges children and youth face in the context of climate mobility, highlighting the urgent need for global attention and collaborative action to safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable among us.



As we develop this Statement, our advisors in Forced Migration, Gender, Human Trafficking, Education, and Data will delve into these challenges while providing us with potential recommendations and actions to start addressing them.

OUR AIM

Reiterating MYCP's dedication to the promotion and protection of children and youth's rights in the context of climate change, on the occasion of the **2023 International Migrants Day**, we:

1 **Advocate** for meaningful youth co-leadership, co-creation, and co-ownership in shaping legislation concerning the international climate mobility agenda.

This commitment **extends beyond** acknowledging diverse voices; it underscores a **dedicated** focus on young women, girls, children with disabilities, youth **confronting** multiple forms of discrimination, those marginalised at the **intersections** of various challenges, youth actively navigating climate frontlines, and those resilient souls persistently on the move;

2 **Address** the pressing fragmentation issue within climate mobility policy advocacy and legal efforts present in regional and international frameworks.

By **fostering collaboration and unity**, we seek to contribute to the conversation by **promoting** a cohesive, interconnected approach that **acknowledges** the complex and intertwined nature of climate-induced migration when it comes to children and youth;

3 **Maintain** our commitment to **enhancing** safe, orderly, and regular pathways for all migrants in vulnerable situations. Central to this commitment is **our endless advocacy** for adopting **human rights-based** and **youth-centred**

approaches to ensure the protection of the human rights of all children on the move.

FORCED MIGRATION

MYCP Advisor, Marc Tilley
with Contributions from Milena Franke

The destructive impact of the global climate crisis, compounded by environmental degradation, poses a complex myriad of threats to the security and well-being of communities worldwide.

Extreme weather events such as droughts, heatwaves, flooding, rising sea levels, and cyclones, as well as **slow-onset** climate events, are **diminishing** access to essential resources, **undermining** public health, **aggravating** inter-community tensions, and **eroding** the structures required to build resilient and equitable societies. When climate and environmental hazards render areas inhospitable for communities, either through sudden weather events or a gradual and persistent change in conditions, **children and young** people, amongst other additionally vulnerable groups, often face specific **challenges** due to their **structural** dependencies and **lack** of financial independence.

To quantify these impacts, according to **UNICEF**, in 2019, around 500 million children lived in areas with a very **high risk** of flooding, and approximately 160 million lived in areas of **extreme or high risk** of drought. With this, over 50 million children have been **forced** to leave their homes, migrating across borders or being displaced within their own countries.

50m

CHILDREN HAVE BEEN FORCED TO
LEAVE THEIR HOMES IN 2019 DUE
TO CLIMATE-RELATED EVENTS

In practice, this means many young people find themselves embarking on dangerous journeys to pave the way for older family members or to search for work so they can send back remittances to their loved ones.

This often translates to youth from rural communities **moving towards** urban communities and being **exposed** to a new range of harms, such as forced labour and other types of exploitation, especially when there are language barriers or ethnic differences. When **forced to move** far from their context of origin, **young women and girls** are also more **likely** to experience sexual and gender-based violence. **Armed conflict** can also be a pre-condition for environmental damage. The *International Committee of the Red Cross* reports that **14 of the 25 most climate-impacted countries globally are in situations of armed conflict.**

QUICK WORLD SNAPSHOT

- In the **Sahel**, for example, young people who are forced to move for climate-related reasons will likely travel through fighting, where risks include being kidnapped for ransom, forcibly conscripted or even targeted.
- Whereas young people in **coastal countries** are increasingly embarking on dangerous maritime crossings as traditional industries, including fishing and agriculture, are impacted by changing climate patterns in places where the erosion of livelihoods can often mean the difference between starving and surviving.
- **Africa** is widely recognised as the continent facing the harshest climate impacts, and it is predicted that more than half the continent will be aged 25 or under by 2050.
- In the **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)** region, the nexus between climate mobility and forced migration can be drawn from the ongoing genocide committed against the **Palestinian** population in Gaza. Not only have millions of Palestinians been displaced without clean water, food and adequate shelter, but they remain exposed to the toxic biosphere caused by Israel's continuous bombings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

It is, therefore, vital that the **centrality of youth is recognised** in all conversations about climate-induced forced migration and that youth are **involved** in all relevant international processes and decision-making spaces;

2

As there is yet no clear legal framework to protect those displaced by climate events, States, humanitarian and development organisations must **prioritise accessible funding** to research and better understand the **complex interaction of compounded vulnerabilities** and structural harms to ensure young people on the move and those at risk of moving, from climate-impacted regions are meaningfully protected.



GENDER

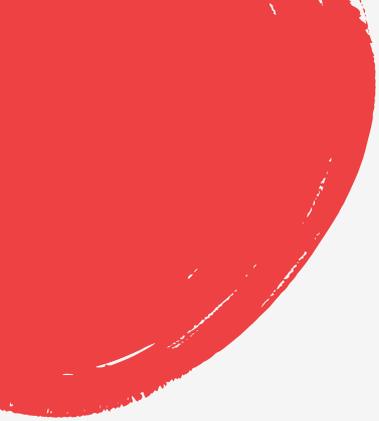
MYCP Advisor, Yasmina Benslimane

**AS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE
MYCP-POLITICS4HER
POLICY BRIEF,**

Climate displacement significantly and **differentially** impacts young women and girls. The **multifaceted** challenges they face are deeply rooted in intersecting factors that amplify existing inequalities.

In **destination areas** affected by climate-related events such as droughts, landslides, floods, and hurricanes, young women often **encounter** distinct **barriers** to resources and employment opportunities. As climate change disrupts livelihoods, young women find themselves **bearing a dual burden**. They are left behind to shoulder the **responsibilities** of caring for families and households while simultaneously grappling with **unequal access** to crucial information, resources, and employment opportunities in their new communities. The **compounding** effects of discrimination, limited access to assets, and increased unpaid care work **exacerbate gender divides**, leaving young women and girls, including those living in rural areas and Indigenous Communities, among other unrepresented groups, disproportionately affected. Climate displacement disproportionately affects not only young women and girls but also compounds the challenges faced by **LGBTQIA+ youth**. The **intersecting** factors of discrimination, unequal access to resources, and economic disparities create additional layers of vulnerability.





Economic disparities and discriminatory laws further contribute to the vulnerability of women, with a staggering 80% of climate change-displaced people being women.

This statistic underscores the **urgency of addressing** gender-specific impacts within climate change policies and actions.

Moreover, as climate change fuels global conflicts, **young women and girls** become **more susceptible to displacement**, often becoming primary providers of essential resources like food, water, and fuel in their communities.

The **societal inequalities and cultural norms** exacerbated by climate change escalate **vulnerabilities** for women and girls. In **fragile and conflict-affected** settings, increased tensions can lead to a **rise** in gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, human trafficking, and child marriage.

Climate change **worsens resource scarcity**, particularly in rural areas, where women and girls are primary providers of essential resources. This heightened burden can force girls to **abandon their education**, limiting their access to opportunities for a better life. Adding to this, in the **aftermath** of climate-related disasters, forcibly displaced young women and girls confront **challenges in accessing** sanitation, privacy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services, particularly pre-natal and menstrual care. The **intersection** of environmental crises and limited access to hygiene resources further underscores the **necessity for a comprehensive and gender-sensitive disaster response**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address this issue, it is crucial to take the following recommendations and actions:

1

Empower women and girls through **gender-responsive** climate policies, programs, and projects that provide **opportunities** for leadership, education, and economic independence;

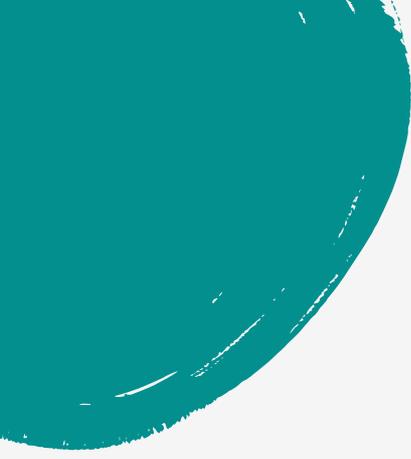
2

Mainstream gender into climate plans, policies, and programs to **assess the implications** of implementation on both women and men, ensuring that these efforts are **inclusive and effective**;

3

Encourage the involvement of young women and girls in climate action, **fostering their leadership** and **participation** in decision-making processes.





HUMAN TRAFFICKING

MYCP Advisor, Ishaan Shah

As climate change destroys livelihoods and women and children are forced to migrate, vulnerabilities to trafficking in persons are exacerbated.

The **absence** of the implementation of these international standards and the **failure to adopt** a human-rights-based approach to climate migrants has enabled a rapidly growing political and corporate **attitude** towards migration – **allowing** complicit parties, including States and the private sector, to enjoy **impunity** for a wide range of abusive and exploitative practices. The structural features of cross-border climate migration can **enable**, if not encourage, **exploitation** that reaches trafficking in persons or modern slavery extremes.

We have to see the **political will** from States to take action to **reduce** vulnerabilities to trafficking in persons by **committing** to the full and effective implementation of guiding international, regional and local **climate, migration and anti-trafficking frameworks**.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Strengthen adaptation and mitigation efforts;

2

Create safer pathways for migration;

3

Ensure that upon arrival in destination countries, migrants must be **treated** with dignity and respect, adopting a **human-rights-based** approach, avoiding criminalisation of those who have been trafficked, and providing access to **gender-transformative support services**.



EDUCATION

MYCP Advisor, Yasmein Abdelghany

While education can help disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, including displaced children and youth, contribute to building a better future, and equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, climate-displaced youth and children suffer exceptional educational vulnerabilities.

The **unique barriers** that hinder displaced children and youth from **accessing** their right to safe and quality education **range** from financial and linguistic barriers to a lack of access to basic education infrastructure and classroom materials and trained teachers who can support children and students suffering from the trauma of displacement.

Researchers in ***Education Cannot Wait*** estimate that in 2020, approximately **62 million** crisis-affected children and youth in 27 countries **had their education disrupted by climate-related events.**



RECOMMENDATIONS

To address this issue, we recommend to:

1

Integrate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in national curriculums that include **education for disaster risk reduction** to prepare for potential natural disasters and climate-induced displacement, enhance national capacities for conducting emergency drills at schools, and draft guides for disaster risk reduction;

2

Invest in and finance different forms of education, especially Non-formal Education, and **prepare** qualified teachers and educators to ensure that we have **alternative education programmes** that help children and young people whose education was interrupted by displacement.



DATA

MYCP Advisor, Hector Poveda

We ought to identify the critical role data plays in understanding the intersectionalities that profoundly affect them

According to a **survey we conducted** in the lead-up to the 2023 *International Forum on Migration Statistics*, 90% of the respondents **believed children and youth must participate actively in data processes**. Furthermore, 45% of the survey participants emphasised the urgent need for governments to **enhance** youth participation and encourage the development of **youth-led solutions to improve data quality**. These findings highlight the growing recognition among stakeholders of the significance of involving children and young people in **decision-making and data processes**, including ensuring an **accurate representation** of the voices of children and youth at critical global, regional and national processes centred around migration, development and data.

In response to this need, we would like to take a moment to **highlight** the work we are doing alongside the **International Data Alliance for Children on the Move** (IDAC), a pioneering initiative led by *UNICEF*, which has partnered with MYCP to create the ***Youth Committee on Migration and Displacement Data***, aiming to spearhead efforts in **advancing** the meaningful participation of children and youth in **migration and displacement data processes**.





IDAC has been a critical partner in ensuring the voices of children and youth are included in data-related processes.

During the 2023 Workshop on *Climate-Related Child Mobility Data* organised by IDAC and UNICEF Innocenti in Geneva, we worked on **identifying existing gaps in data collection**. For instance, the need to make data **accessible** to children and youth by **translating complex** knowledge into **child-sensitive** and **child-friendly** inclusive language, ensuring that information is available and **easily** understood by young advocates and migrants, **promoting inclusive engagement** and fostering a deeper connection with data in **local languages**.

To conclude, we emphasise the necessity for **collaborative partnerships** between youth and research institutions, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders. When children are **involved** in decision-making, it **empowers** them, ensures their perspectives are considered, and enables them to **shape policies** that affect their lives actively. Similarly, engaging young people in data-related processes **enhances** the collected data's **accuracy**, relevance, and comprehensiveness, leading to more informed and effective policy development.



RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve data processes, we recommend to:

1

Acknowledge children and youth for their potential to bring creative additions to data-related initiatives, including tech-savvy solutions that can expand the reach and relevance of data-related efforts;

2

Recognise Indigenous Youth as integral data agents as they **possess** unique insights and experiences in accurately understanding and predicting the impact of climate change and extractive activities. **Coordinated** efforts should address funding and access challenges for Indigenous Youth and marginalised groups, ensuring **diverse representation**, particularly from regions marked by poverty or financial disadvantage, in data-driven decision-making processes.



CALL FOR ACTION

1 **Establish** policy frameworks that protect migrants with designed migration procedures and integrated approaches that consider the multifaceted challenges of climate displacement while **ensuring** meaningful participation of the youth in the development, design, formulation and establishment of these policies and decision-making processes that affect them.

2 **Invest** in research and development for the collection of disaggregated data on how climate-induced mobility affects the diversified group of children and youth to help **design** appropriate solutions and policies, and generate innovative disaster risk reduction solutions, create **awareness** and educate the masses about the adverse effects of climate change, mitigation, and adaptation measures to build **resilient** communities and encourage **collaborative** efforts among all stakeholders.

3 **Embrace** and **promote** gender mainstreaming into climate plans, policies, and programs; **empower** women and girls through gender-responsive climate policies, programs, and projects that provide opportunities for leadership, education, and economic independence; and promote and encourage their full participation in decision-making.

WHAT'S

NEXT

It is crystal clear that climate mobility has a robust and direct link with forced migration, often exacerbating difficulties already faced by children and youth worldwide.

Extreme weather patterns, such as floods, cyclones, storm surges, and slow onset events like droughts, forest degradation, and rising sea levels, force people to leave their homes and move either within their countries or across borders. Children and youth are among the **most vulnerable** groups deeply affected by climate change due to their **age** and **dependency** on adults for their care, protection, and decision-making, among others.

By **stressing the threats** to which children and youth are **exposed** when forced to move, we want to **advocate** for the establishment of solid migration **frameworks** that properly tackle the **intersectionality** between climate mobility, human trafficking, gender-based violence and missed education at the local, national, regional and international levels.

To this end, we are spearheading the **Global Climate Mobility Youth Declaration** in cooperation with other youth organisations —an initiative that **stresses** the intricate interconnections between climate change, human mobility, and the well-being of children and youth across the globe. It is **increasingly clear** that young people play a crucial role in shaping the future of our planet; there is no doubt about that. As a result, we hope that our **Global Climate Mobility Youth Declaration** stands as a testament to the power of youth's collective knowledge, passion, and innovative spirit on a global scale.



Using this momentum, we aim to conclude these efforts by establishing the **Climate Mobility Youth Hub**—a dynamic **space** that will serve as a link for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and action among children and youth worldwide. This hub will **facilitate dialogue** among youth from diverse backgrounds and act as a **driving** force for transformative **initiatives** that address the **intersectionality** of climate, mobility, and the well-being of our youngest and most vulnerable populations. Here, we seek to **amplify the voices** of young advocates, children and youth on the move, youth actively navigating climate frontlines, children with disabilities, youth confronting multiple forms of discrimination, and the many voices that deserve to be listened to. Voices who are deeply **committed** to fostering sustainable solutions, championing environmental justice, and advocating for the welfare of vulnerable communities.

We aim to **catalyse** a global movement towards a more resilient and youth-led sustainable future by tapping into young people's passion and drive for change.



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We want to extend our sincere appreciation to the dedicated members of MYCP who have played an integral role in developing this Statement.

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Migration Youth and Children Platform

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